

5 Cal Grant Award Selection Process

5.1 Overview

Each January, the Commission begins receiving ISIR records from the FAFSA Central Processor. ISIRs for the Commission are placed in a “mailbox” set up by the USED. The Commission’s mailbox is populated with all ISIRs generated from FAFSAs that matched at least one of the following profiles:

- ✓ Completed by a California resident
- ✓ California school listed in FAFSA Step Six



Once the Commission begins receiving ISIR records, the annual Entitlement award processes begin. ISIR records are reviewed, matched with GPA records and then processed for Cal Grant Entitlement eligibility. The Cal Grant Entitlement Program selection process runs weekly throughout the year. Previously unawarded Entitlement applicants are re-evaluated each time updated information is received, provided that the initial application data were submitted by the March 2 deadline.

Applications for Cal Grant Competitive applicants are held and processed all at one time. The date for the Competitive run is based on information received from the Central Processor that applications postmarked by the March 2 deadline have been processed through their system. The Commission uses the most recent ISIR record on file when the competition is run.

5.2 Cal Grant A & B Selection Process

There are six basic steps to the Commission’s selection process. Applications are first checked for potential eligibility for a Cal Grant High School Entitlement award.

Step 1: Filter

All ISIR records are first reviewed for a matching high school GPA within the correct graduation date range for a high school Entitlement award. If no graduation date is listed, an age proxy is used to determine potential Entitlement eligibility. Applications meeting the filter criteria are also checked for a valid Social Security number and to determine if an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) has been calculated.

Applications not meeting the criteria for the high school Entitlement are then checked for a matching CCC GPA within the correct graduation date range for a Transfer Entitlement award. If no graduation date is listed, an age proxy is used to determine potential Entitlement eligibility. The date of birth is also checked to exclude applicants over 24 years of age. Applications are also reviewed to see if the applicant has listed at least one baccalaureate degree-granting institution. Applications meeting the filter criteria are checked for a valid Social Security number and to determine if an EFC has been calculated.

Applications that were not already processed through either the High School Entitlement process or the Transfer Entitlement process are held until the Competitive Cal Grant process is run. When the Competitive process runs, applications are first screened to determine if an EFC has been calculated. Applications without an EFC or a valid Social Security number are not processed further.

Student notifications: Blank EFC letters (Entitlement applicants only)

School access: None, students do not yet appear on WebGrants

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Social Security Number Edits

All new grant applications are edited for a valid SSN through a range check of the three sections of the Social Security number. The edit requires that the first three digits meet the following range criteria:

- Greater than or equal to 001 and less than or equal to 587; or
- Greater than or equal to 589 and less than or equal to 649; or
- Greater than or equal to 700 and less than or equal to 728.

The edit also requires that the middle two digits be greater than 00 and that the last four digits be greater than 0000.

Step 2: Validation

The ISIR records are next matched with the Commission's database to determine if the name, date of birth and Social Security number match existing records. The database is also checked to see if the student has an existing Cal Grant award. New student records are added to the database. Those with mismatched data or those who were previously awarded, are held for manual review; however, only Entitlement-eligible students are given the opportunity to correct their application data.

Student notifications: None

School access: None, students do not yet appear on WebGrants

Step 3: Match GPA/Test score

The system next looks for a GPA or test score for the applicant, and the database record is updated with the specific GPA or test score data. If multiple GPA records are found for a student, the highest appropriate GPA is used. (See Chapter 4 for more information.) Test scores are converted to a GPA equivalent. In order to provide a general idea of the

conversion, the following chart summarizes the test score equivalents for a 2.0 and a 3.0 GPA.

Student notifications: None

School access: None, students do not yet appear on WebGrants

Minimum Required Test Scores

	2.0 Equivalent	3.0 Equivalent
SAT (Composite)	854	968
ACT	16	26
GED	45	63

Step 4: Non-financial Edits

Common Edits- The application is first reviewed for overall Cal Grant eligibility. These are called common edits as described in Chapter 3. The following fields are checked:

- ✓ California residency
- ✓ California residency at time of HS graduation (Entitlement applicants only)
- ✓ Eligible California School listed
- ✓ No bachelor's degree received
- ✓ Education level < 5
- ✓ Remaining Cal Grant eligibility

All students are subject to these edits.

Program Edits- Next, the specific program eligibility is checked. These are called program edits. The following factors are reviewed:

- ✓ Eligible school (for specific program)
- ✓ GPA (2.0 for Cal Grant B and 3.0 for Cal Grant A) (2.40 for transfer Entitlement A&B)
- ✓ Degree objective (for Cal Grant C)
- ✓ Remaining eligibility by program

Student notifications:

Entitlement: "Application on-hold" letter and correction form

Competitive: "Application disqualification" letter sent

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School access: Schools can view the reason(s) why an application rejected due to the common edits on the WebGrants Student Award Summary screen in the “C/E Reason” column. Program edit disqualifications can be viewed on the same screen in the “P/E Reason” column. The Award Status column will display either “C/E DISQ” or “P/E DISQ.” Further detail can be viewed in the Student Award Detail screen.

Step 5: Financial Edits

Applications passing all the non-financial edits are then reviewed to determine if the applicant meets the financial eligibility requirements. There are four financial edits: income, assets, financial need and minimum need.

Income Ceilings- The application is checked to ensure that the applicant does not exceed the income ceilings.

Dependent students: The parent’s total income, as calculated by the federal processor, is checked against the maximum amount for Cal Grant A and Cal Grant B based on family size.

Independent students: The student’s total income, plus those of their spouse (if applicable), as calculated by the federal processor, is checked against the maximum amount for Cal Grant A and Cal Grant B based on family size.

Asset Ceilings- The application data is checked to ensure that the applicant does not exceed the asset ceilings. The parent’s net worth, as calculated by the federal processor, is checked against the maximum amount for dependent students. For independent students, the student’s net worth, plus that of their spouse (if applicable), is reviewed.

Financial Need- The financial need amount is then checked using the cost of attendance reported by the first eligible California school

listed on the applicant’s ISIR. The calculation method uses the following formula:

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{Cost of Attendance} \\ - \text{EFC} \\ - \text{Veteran's Benefits} \\ \hline = \text{Need} \end{array}$$

If the result of the calculation is zero or less, then the application will fail with a reason code, “No Financial Need.”

Minimum Need Not Met- Using the formula above for calculating need, Cal Grant A and C applicants must have financial need equal to or greater than the maximum Cal Grant tuition award at the school listed first on their ISIR, plus \$1,500. For Cal Grant B selection, an applicant must show at least \$700 in need to pass this edit.

Student notifications:

Entitlement: “Application disqualification” letter and correction form

Competitive: “Application disqualification” letter sent

School access: Schools can view the reason(s) why an application rejected due to the financial edits on the WebGrants Student Award Summary screen in the column “P/E Reason.” The Award Status column will display “FIN INEL” and the “P/E Reason” column will display the reason(s) the application failed. Further detail can be obtained from the Student Award Detail screen.

Step 6: Scoring and Selection

Students who are eligible for a Cal Grant A or B Competitive award based on successfully passing all of the non-financial and financial edits are then scored based on criteria set by the Student Aid Commission. California statute directs the Commission to establish selection criteria for Cal Grant Competitive A and B awards that give special consideration to

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disadvantaged students, taking into consideration those financial, educational, cultural, language, home, community, environmental, and other conditions that hamper a student's access to, and ability to persist in, postsecondary education programs. These criteria are reviewed annually and updated as needed. See chart below.

Scoring Categories

Category	Maximum Points
Grade Point Average (GPA)	70
Parent's Educational Level	18
Access Equalizer	18
Family Income & Household Size	76*
Applicants can receive points in one of the following categories:	
-Single Parent Household	18
-Married/single independent student	18
-Ward of the court- if unmarried with no dependents	22
Maximum Total Points	200

*A ward of the court, if unmarried with no dependents, can receive only up to a maximum of 72 points in this category. As a result, no applicant can score higher than 200 points.

Top 2% Students- The scoring process described above is used for Cal Grant B Entitlement recipients to select the top 2%. Those students scoring in the top 2% are eligible for a tuition and fee award, in addition to the access award, during their freshman year. This process is run in June after the majority of Entitlement recipients have been selected.

GPA- The GPA score is obtained using the GPA verified by school officials. Points range uniformly from 0 to 70, depending on the verified GPA.

Parents' Educational Level - For each parent, an applicant receives:

- 0 points for any college educated parent,
- 5 points for each high school educated parent,
- 9 points for a parent with middle school/junior high education, or
- 9 points for applicants indicating the parent educational level is other or unknown.

Access Equalizer- This process awards points to Competitive applicants who had a "disadvantaged high school experience." Points are assigned based on one of the following categories:

- Submitted a General Equivalency Development (GED) test score (18 points),
- Has a GPA verified by a California continuation high school (18 points),
- Attended a high school in the upper quartile based on number of participants in the federal Title I program (18 points), or
- Ranks in the lowest quartile for university-going rates and has at least 25% participation rate in the federal Title I free or reduced price lunch program (18 points)
- If the student is a late or reentry student, the number of assigned Access Equalizer points will vary depending upon the educational level of the student and the number of years since the student has attended high school per the following chart.

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Late or Reentry Student Access Points-

# of Years Out of High School	Educational Level				
	No College	1	2	3	4
2-3	9	6	3	0	0
4-5	12	9	6	0	0
6-7	15	12	9	3	0
8 or more	18	15	12	6	3

Family Income/Household Size- Points are assigned uniformly from 30 to 76 depending on family income and size of household. Wards of the court who are unmarried and without dependents can only receive up to a maximum of 72 points in this category.

Student or Parent Household Status-

Applicants can receive points in one of three categories:

- Dependent applicants: Receive 0 points if their parents are married or 18 points if their parents are single, separated, divorced or widowed.
- Independent applicants: Receive 18 points if unmarried with dependents. Independent applicants who are married and/or have no dependents received 0 points.
- Wards of the court: Applicants who are unmarried, without dependents and indicate they are or were orphans or wards of the court receive 22 points.

Once the applications are scored, the top 11,250 for each Competitive cycle are selected.

Student notifications: All applicants who go through the selection process with a complete application (FAFSA + GPA) receive a notification letter. Students who have been

awarded receive a California Aid Report (CAR) and non-recipients receive a letter notifying them that their score was too low to receive a Cal Grant award.

School access: Schools can view an applicant's final award status on the Student Award Summary screen, the Student Award Detail screen and the California Aid Report screen. An applicant's score can also be viewed on the Student Award Detail screen. All three screens are located in the Student Info Main Menu on WebGrants.

No (Other) Scoring for Entitlement- There is no scoring process for Entitlement Award applicants (other than the top 2% of Cal Grant B Entitlement recipients, described previously). All applicants meeting the general eligibility and financial requirements receive an award. Eligible applicants are selected for either a Cal Grant A or B based on their GPA and income. Applicants eligible for both a Cal Grant A and a Cal Grant B Entitlement are awarded based on which award will be most beneficial at the school they are most likely to attend. Students may switch their program preference, with consent from their school's financial aid office, prior to the time they receive their first Cal Grant payment.

5.3 Student Notifications

Notification of New Recipients

The Commission uses the CAR to notify new recipients of their Cal Grant award. The CAR explains the student's award status at the first three eligible California schools the student listed on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). If the student is a Competitive applicant and found ineligible for the first school reported, no other eligible California schools will be considered for eligibility.

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CAR Enclosures- Included with each CAR is a New Recipient Cal Grant Reference Manual and a New Cal Grant Recipient Change Form. The Recipient Change Form should be filled out and returned only if the student's current information, as shown on the CAR, is different from the Commission's records. Although the CAR lists up to three schools, the student will be included only on the Cal Grant roster for the first school listed on the CAR. Participants are instructed to report to the Commission if they attend any school other than the one listed first on their CAR.

Examples of CAR Use-As stated above, the CAR lists eligibility information for up to three schools in the same order listed on the FAFSA. Only those California schools at which the student has eligibility in at least one Cal Grant program are listed. The school and grant program for which a dollar amount is listed is the "auto accept" (or automatically accepted) award. If the student qualifies for more than one grant program at a given school, the "auto accept" grant is the grant the school or the Commission has determined would be the most advantageous to award to the student.

Second \$\$ amount on CAR? The recipient may be eligible for an award in a different grant program, as indicated by a second dollar amount or an appropriate reason code on the CAR. The student should review all the information provided on the CAR to determine if a change of school and/or grant program choice is needed.

Student attends second school listed. If the student decides to attend a school other than the first one listed on the CAR, the student should immediately return the *New Recipient Change Form* to report their actual school of attendance or have their school submit a school change through WebGrants.

Additional examples and a description of the codes used on the CAR are included in Appendix **XX**.

Notification of Non-Recipients

All applicants submitting complete applications for a Cal Grant, by the appropriate filing deadline, will receive notification of their grant status. As described above, there are various stages during the awarding process that generate correspondence.

Students who submit incomplete or late applications will not receive notification.

"Blank EFC" Letter- Applicants whose ISIR record could not be processed further because an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) was not calculated by the federal processor will receive a "Blank EFC" letter. These letters are only produced for applications being processed through the Entitlement cycle. Entitlement applicants should make corrections to their Student Aid Report (SAR). The Commission will continue to process the new ISIR records and will update the student's record when the EFC is received.

The reasons for a missing EFC usually include a failure to provide parents' income(s) or a failure to complete required sections of the FAFSA. The ISIR information from an incomplete (no EFC) ISIR cannot be viewed by Commission Customer Service staff. Therefore, applicants without an EFC, who require more information on their status, must contact the Federal Student Aid Information Center at (800) 433-3243 to determine why no EFC could be produced.

"Application on-hold" letter and correction form- Applicants not selected as recipients receive notification letters explaining the reason(s) they were not awarded. The letter

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lists the specific disqualification reason(s), and includes an *Entitlement Non-Recipient Fact Sheet* and an Application Correction Form (G-23).

“Application disqualification” letter- Ineligible Competitive award applicants with complete applications will receive a letter and a *Competitive Non-Recipient Fact Sheet*. No correction form is supplied to ineligible Competitive award applicants. Although the Commission will respond to any correspondence received from a student, parent or school, appeals for Competitive award applicants will be reviewed only for Commission procedural compliance. Information on student and institutional appeal procedures is described later in this chapter.

5.4 School Notifications

All new Cal Grant recipients will appear on the Cal Grant payment roster of the first school listed on the CAR. Rosters are generated beginning in January of the award year. Schools may process school changes for new recipients using WebGrants at any time after they are awarded.

Schools can view a student’s award status and the CAR data using the Student Info screens on WebGrants. The CAR is retrieved by using the student’s Social Security number and the year of the CAR. On WebGrants, the 2004-05 year will be entered as “2005.” If the student has had more than one CAR issued, a new window will open allowing the selection of the desired CAR. Since the CAR represents the original award offer made to a student, it does not necessarily reflect the student’s current Cal Grant status.

Schools wishing to check the status of a group of students who have been admitted to their

institution can upload a file of Social Security numbers through the Award Status Extract process and receive a report listing Cal Grant recipients.

5.5 Cal Grant C Selection Process

In addition to the basic Cal Grant program requirements, applicants are considered for a Cal Grant C award if **all** of the following are true:

- The applicant is not Cal Grant A or B eligible.
- The FAFSA indicates a Cal Grant C eligible school.
- The applicant indicates on the FAFSA that he or she will be working toward a vocational degree or certificate.
- The applicant shows financial need of at least the maximum Cal Grant C tuition payment payable for the school segment the student is attending, plus \$1,500, and is below program income and asset ceilings.

Student notifications: If all of the above are true, the applicant is mailed a *Cal Grant C Supplement* following Step 6 of the selection process described in the previous section. Cal Grant C recipients are selected according to a composite score based on responses to questions on the *Cal Grant C Supplement* plus the initial GPA information, if received. A GPA is not required, but may provide a higher score for the student. *Cal Grant C Supplements* are evaluated and scored based on a student’s past performance, e.g., work history, experience, educational history, vocational/educational recommendation, and GPA (see below). The *Cal Grant C Supplement* must be completed and returned by the May 15 deadline to be included in the competition.

School access: Schools may view a list of Cal Grant applicants that listed their institution as

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the one they are most likely to attend using the Cal Grant C Supplement Recipient Report located on the Data Transfer Report Download screen on WebGrants. This report is generated once a year and is only available online.

Cal Grant C Scoring Criteria

Other than the GPA (if submitted), the Cal Grant C scoring factors are all taken from the *Cal Grant C Supplement*. Once submitted, no changes to the *Cal Grant C Supplement* information will be accepted.

Cal Grant C Scoring Criteria

<u>Weighted Factors</u>	<u>Maximum Points</u>
Work History	25
Educational History	25
Recommendation	35
<u>GPA</u>	<u>15</u>
Total	100

5.6 September 2 Competitive Selection Process

The selection of September 2 deadline Competitive awards is similar to the March 2 Competitive award process. Applicants who applied for, but did not receive, an award during the March 2 processes are automatically considered during the September selection process. The primary difference between the two Competitive processes is the initial filter. In addition to filing a FAFSA and a GPA by the September 2 deadline, the applicant must also appear on a California Community College enrollment file. The process for submitting an enrollment file is described in Chapter 4.8.

The filter checks that a FAFSA, GPA and Enrollment Verification were received. Any applications not meeting these criteria are not processed further.

The same scoring matrix is used and Competitive grants are awarded to those meeting the selected cutoff score.

5.7 Correction and Appeal Process ISIR Drawdown Process

Between January 1 and March 2, corrections made to the SAR, either on-line by the student or school or on the paper SAR, will be applied by the federal processor. Upon processing, another SAR version will be created and made available to the student, the schools listed on the SAR and the Commission. Early filing of the FAFSA allows the maximum time to submit any changes to SAR data.

After the March 2 or September 2 deadlines, ISIR corrections sent through the federal processor will still be accessible for Cal Grant purposes because the Commission is still drawing down the ISIRs and corrected ISIRs on a daily basis.

ISIR Data Corrections

After the competitive process runs, only corrections to ISIR data for Entitlement non-awarded applicants will be accepted. Schools can submit these changes via the *Grant Record Change Form for Schools* (G-21) or on-line through WebGrants. Schools should submit only those corrections that will lead to an award notification. In instances where the school cannot make this determination, assistance can be obtained from the Commission.

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Entitlement GPA Corrections

GPA corrections for Entitlement applicants should be made by the school that originally supplied the GPA. Properly certified Entitlement GPA corrections will be accepted after the filing deadline with a tentative final correction date of November 30 of the award year. GPA corrections should be made on school letterhead with the GPA and a statement that the GPA was calculated in accordance with the requirements of the Cal Grant program. Transcripts will not be accepted as means of correcting a Cal Grant GPA.

Competitive GPA Corrections- Once the award selection has been made, GPA corrections for Competitive applicants are not accepted. Should an unsuccessful March 2 Competitive applicant wish to submit a newly calculated GPA for the September 2 award competition, this is done in the same manner as any regularly submitted September 2 GPA and is not considered a correction.

Demographic Corrections

Once an applicant's record is loaded to the Commission's system, demographic changes such as name, address, phone number and Social Security number must be made directly to the Commission. Students can make these types of corrections on a *Grant Record Change Form for Students (G-10)* with appropriate documentation submitted for name and Social Security number changes. Schools can submit demographic changes using the WebGrants Demographics screen located under the Student Info menu.

Address changes for Entitlement recipients may be possible as early as January. Since Competitive award applications are not loaded to the system until shortly before the award

selection, it will not be possible to update address changes directly to GDS until after the award selection process is complete. The Commission will use the most recently processed ISIR so demographic changes should be made through the SAR correction process until the final drawdown occurs.

Appeals

A new or renewal applicant who was denied a Cal Grant, withdrawn from the program, or who believes that he or she received less than the maximum amount of award eligibility, may appeal his or her status to the Commission. Presentation of an appeal does not guarantee that an award offer will be made, but it will assure that a Commission analyst reviews the applicant's situation.

Funding is guaranteed for all eligible Cal Grant Entitlement applicants who meet the filing deadline. Appeals and data corrections are encouraged for students who met the filing deadlines, yet did not receive Entitlement award consideration. For Cal Grant Competitive award applicants, however, no guarantee of funding is made and it is unlikely, **even upon appeal**, that an award offer will be made due to the limited number of available awards.

Prior to sending an appeal, students are advised to carefully review the correspondence sent to them and to visit the Commission's Web site to obtain as much information as possible on the eligibility criteria for the Cal Grant program to determine if an appeal is appropriate.

All appeals should be made in writing and mailed to the Commission at the following address:



California Student Aid Commission
Grant Services Division
P.O. Box 419027
Rancho Cordova, CA 95741-9027

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The appeal letter should clearly state the reason for the appeal and should contain at least the following information:

- ✓ Student's complete name
- ✓ Student's Social Security number, or CSAC ID
- ✓ Student's complete address
- ✓ Student's phone number
- ✓ A photocopy of all Commission correspondence that relates to the student's appeal

Professional judgment at school- Information on special circumstances regarding the student's financial or family situations should be resolved by the financial aid office; the Commission has no authority to exercise professional judgment. Schools may send application corrections to the Commission if exercising their professional judgment following the correction process described above.

For reconsideration of an award due to the Commission's non-receipt of a form, a photocopy of the properly completed document and an authoritative proof of mailing dated by the due date should be included with the appeal letter.

Acceptable documentation includes:

- ✓ US Postal Service Certificate of Mailing (preferred)
- ✓ US Postal Service Certified Mail Receipt
- ✓ US Postal Service Registered Mail Receipt
- ✓ Federal Express, UPS or other private mailing service receipt showing the item was delivered to the correct address on time
- ✓ For *FAFSA on the Web* applicants, a printout of their "confirmation" page, along with the application confirmation number, can be used as proof of timely submission

A proof of mailing that displays any "mailed to" address other than the Federal Student Aid Programs- for FAFSA applications, or the


Commission- for a GPA certification, cannot be used to show proper mailing of the application. Although the mailing may be timely, the Commission will not accept responsibility for mail addressed incorrectly.

Appeals that are otherwise complete may be denied if the appeal was not received in a timely manner. The Commission cannot release funds for past year awards.

Commission Review of Appeal Letter



Commission Customer Services Branch staff will review the applicant's situation to determine whether the current status of their application is consistent with Commission procedures, policies and program regulations. Although, formal appeals cannot be accepted via e-mail, questions on the student's situation can be answered via e-mail at the Customer Service e-mail address: custsvcs@csac.ca.gov.

 A telephone inquiry to Commission Customer Service staff at (888) 224-7268 can also answer any questions.

The Commission will examine the following to determine the validity of each appeal letter:

- ✓ The documentation enclosed with the appeal letter (checking for completeness, validity, and timeliness of submitting the appeal letter)
- ✓ The student's record on the Grant Delivery System (GDS)
- ✓ The appropriate reference manuals, fact sheets, guidelines and other materials pertaining to the student's appeal (program regulations and Commission policies may also be examined)